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SOME REMARKABLE PASSAGES

IN THE LIFE OF

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DR. GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE,

LATE OF GERMANTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA,

Who departed this life in March, 1793, in
the ninetieth year of his age,

INCLUDING WHAT HE SAW AND HEARD IN A TRANCE OF FORTY-TWO HOURS'
DURATION, BOTH IN THE REGIONS OF HAPPINESS AND MISERY;
TOGETHER WITH A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF HIS CRUEL
PERSECUTION IN FRANCE FOR' PREACH-
ING THE GOSPEL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF HIS OWN MANUSCRIPT.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED A RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE BY THE
TRANSLATOR,

REV. ELHANAN WINCHESTER.

A Reprint from the American Edition of 1800. Revised and Corrected.
With Notes and Addenda not hitherto Published.

GERMANTOWN, PA.:
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

I BLESS God that I was ever acquainted with DR. GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE, for such an humble, pious, loving man I have scarcely ever seen in my pilgrimage through life. To such as consider this account romantic, absurd, and inconsistent, I shall only say, "That if they had known the author as well as I did, I doubt not they would have thought of him in a good measure as I do." I think it impossible that a man of his piety, humility, benevolence, and universal good character should have been guilty of deliberately imposing upon mankind; and from the very nature and circumstances of the case, I cannot see how it is possible that he should be imposed upon himself. I have no doubt of the truth of this relation myself, and have delivered it faithfully as I received it. I consider myself hastening to the bar of God, where I expect very shortly to give up my account to the Judge of all the earth, and therefore

God forbid that I should ever practice deception or imposition on my fellow-creatures.

ELHANAN WINCHESTER.*

* An American clergyman and theological writer of note, and native of Brookline, Massachusetts. Born in 1751, and was first minister of the Baptist Church in Newton, Massachusetts; subsequently preached Calvinism in South Carolina, but in 1781 was converted to the doctrines of the Restorationists, and his ripest and best years were given to promulgating that faith in Philadelphia and England. He was an industrious writer, and among his productions, "Four Dialogues on Universal Restoration" is perhaps best known. He died in Hartford, Connecticut, in April, 1797. His first biographer was William Vidler, who published "A Sketch of His Life and a Review of His Writings" in 1797. Another biography, by Edwin M. Stone, was published in 1836.

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

" 'Tis strange, but true ; for truth is always strange ;
Stranger than fiction."

THE extraordinary narrative of which the present publication is a revised reproduction, was put into MS. form by the author a little more than one hundred years ago, and soon after given to the American public by the translator ; followed by an edition in England, in 1791. Within the century successive reprints have appeared, but the last edition passed out of print many years since. It is simply a plain, unadorned recital of a series of remarkable occurrences in the career of an humble and devout Christian, who in his day and generation, as preacher and physician,—ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of mankind,—was practically a public benefactor, and the potential influence he wielded through life still endures. In the present edition a few historical notes have been introduced to lend

additional interest to the narrative, and, as Dr. de Benneville's narration closes with his arrival in America, a biographical supplement has been included, briefly referring to a few important events connected with his half-century of life in America. Material from the most authentic sources has been laid under contribution in preparing the addenda, and grateful acknowledgments are especially due his grand-daughter and oldest living descendant, the venerable Mrs. Harriet de Benneville Keim, and also his great-grand-daughter, Mrs. Anna de Benneville Michener, for original MSS. and other valuable biographical data.

C. C.

GERMANTOWN, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA,

December, 1889.

SOME REMARKABLE PASSAGES

IN THE LIFE OF

DR. GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE.

I, GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE, was born in London, England, on the twenty-sixth of July, 1703. My father, George de Benneville, was a French refugee, persecuted for his religion. He retired with his family and connections into England upon the invitation of his Majesty King William III., who took a tender care of them, and employed them at his Court.

My mother was of the Granville family; she had nine children in five years after marriage, having twins four years successively, and I being the last, she died as soon as I was born. She believed that she would die at that time, and therefore was very often drawn, whilst she was pregnant, to pray for me, and it appears that the Lord had heard her prayers and answered them.

I was also very young when my father died, and was brought up by one of my uncles. After the death of my mother, Queen Anne* herself provided me a nurse, and had the care of my early years.

When arrived at the age of twelve years I was very wild, believing myself to belong to a different class from mankind in general; by this fond imagination I was self-exalted, and thought myself above other men; but God soon convinced me to the contrary. As it was designed that I should learn navigation, I was sent to sea in a vessel of war attached to a small fleet bound to the coast of Barbary with presents, and to renew the peace with Algiers, Tunis, and Tripolis. Being arrived at Algiers, as I walked upon deck, I saw some Moors who brought refreshments to sell; one of them fell and injured one of his legs; two of his companions having laid him on deck, kissed the wound and shed tears upon it; then turning towards the rising of the sun, they cried in such a manner that I was moved with much anger,

* The Queen was his godmother, and as the narrative states, he was educated under her care, and placed in the royal navy. A piece of plate presented to him by the Queen, and decorated with the royal arms, is still in the possession of one of his descendants.

and ordered my servant to bring them before me. Upon demanding the reason of their outcry, they, perceiving that I was angry, implored my pardon, and told me the cause was owing to one of their brothers having hurt his leg by a fall, and that they kissed the wound in order to sympathize with him, and likewise shed tears upon it, and as tears were saltish, they were a good remedy for the hurt; and the reason for their turning towards the rising sun was to invoke him who created the sun to have compassion upon their poor brother and be pleased to heal him. Upon that I was so convinced and moved within that I thought my heart would break, and that my life was about to leave me; my eyes were filled with tears, and I felt such an internal condemnation that I was forced to cry out and say, "Are these men Heathens? No; I confess before God they are Christians, and I myself am a Heathen!" Behold the first conviction that the grace of our Sovereign Good employed: he was pleased to convince a white person by blacks, one who carried the name of a Christian, by a Pagan, and who was obliged to confess himself a Heathen. Still that was soon overcome and forgotten. But

God, who always seeks to convince and save his poor creatures, did not forsake his poor wandering sheep, for, some time after my return home, being present by invitation at a ball, and having overheated myself, I ordered my servant to prepare a change of linen for me, and as I was putting it on I fell in a faint, and had a vision of myself burning as a fire-brand in Hell, and, returning to consciousness, I cried out, "I am damned!" Prayers were desired in the French churches for one who had lost his senses and was melancholy. . . . The ministers often visited me, and would fain have made me believe that I had not committed any very great sins, and had only behaved according to my rank and station. Then I was constrained to answer them, that if they had no other things than those to tell me, they could serve no other purpose than fig-leaves to cover my shame and my damnable estate; that it was in vain to offer me that kind of comfort, for I felt myself condemned. Then they answered me in another manner than before, saying that, since I would not receive their remonstrances, it might be considered as evidence that peradventure I was destined from the beginning to condemnation.

Then they gave me up and came no more to visit me. I continued in a state of condemnation during the space of fifteen months, believing that all the world but myself might be saved, because my sins, as I thought, were too many and too great to be forgiven. At length, having passed through many temptations, having laid myself down to repose one day, it happened that I was awakened out of my sleep by a voice within me, which pronounced the sentence of my condemnation and left me with no room for hope. I then discovered the root of all my sins and iniquities to be within my heart: that discovery brought me into an extreme agony, and despair took possession of my soul, which was now pressed on all sides with misery, caused especially by great unbelief and hardness of heart. I could discover no remedy for my troubles, which had now become almost insupportable, but thought that my sentence of damnation was going to be executed: the sorrow of my soul was even unto death; I desired to die, but death fled from me: I could find no remedy but to submit to the justice of my Judge, because I knew that his judgments were just, and I had merited even more than I suffered.

Thus abandoning myself to the mercy of my Judge, and waiting for its accomplishment, I discovered between Justice and myself—the criminal—One of a most majestic appearance, whose beauty, brightness, and grandeur can never be described: he looked upon me with grace and mercy, and with a penetrating look of love, the fire of which so embraced my soul that I loved him in return. He persuaded me in my heart that he was my Saviour, Mediator, and Reconciliator, and while I thought thereon, he began to intercede for me in the following manner, saying, “My Father, behold me with thy paternal regard: I have made expiation for this sinner, who hath received in himself the sentence of condemnation. I have taken human nature for him. I have suffered all kinds of ignominy for him. I have suffered the shameful death of the cross for him. I have shed my blood even to the last drop for him. I have descended into the abyss of Hell for him, that I might deliver him. I have been put to death for his offences, and raised again for his justification, and where his sins abound, our grace abounds much more. O my Heavenly Father, pardon this poor sinner, and cause thy mercy to

descend upon him." The Judge or Justice had nothing more to say. The sentence disappeared. Then I heard his eternal, universal voice, which penetrated me with divine power, saying, "Take courage, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Immediately all the burthen of my sins and iniquities was removed, all the stings and reproaches ceased, a living faith came in their stead, and the tears of sorrow were all wiped from my eyes; I cast myself at the feet of my Mediator, Reconciler, Intercessor, and Saviour, and embraced him with an enlivening faith, melting into tears of love, humility, and nothingness.

O my Lord, and my God, thou hast saved me through pure grace; what shall I render to thee for all thy benefits? O my Divine Love, whom I honor and adore, give me a pure and holy heart, filled with thy virtues and thy love, even such as thou wouldst that I should have; and renew a right spirit within my breast. Now I know that thy marvellous mercy had provided me a Saviour before I was conscious of my danger; a Physician who had the care of my disease before I knew of its existence; a Redeemer who undertook to dis-

charge the debt that I was neither willing nor able to pay. O my Benefactor, guide me by the efficacy of thy spirit to walk in the way of thy truth and universal love. Teach me thy eternal word; speak, my Lord, and my God, for thy servant heareth. Give me thy grace, O my Divine Love, that I may have the eyes of my faith fixed constantly upon thee, that I may follow thee whithersoever thou leadest me, that thy holy will may be accomplished in time and eternity, to the praise of thy glory, and my complete salvation.

O my dear soul! sink thyself into nothingness and the deepest humiliation, and adore in spirit and in truth the ocean of love, and the great wonders of the wisdom and power of thy God, who hath employed all these boundless, incomprehensible miracles to restore and to save thee, and not thee only, but all the human species, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and power of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out; for of him, and through him, and for him, are all things. To him be glory eternal.

In my case his goodness shines. He loved me

before I was born. Oh, what grace! He loved me in my fallen estate when I was wholly lost. Oh, what mercy! He even loved me when I was altogether unworthy, and freely too. Oh, what love!

He hath given me his well-beloved Son, and in giving his beloved Son, he hath given me his paternal heart; and at the time he took human nature, he became my parent, that by his parentage he might have a right to love and care for me. I saw him, the Just, suffer for my offences and wickedness, which he had taken to bear as his own, brought before the most righteous judgment seat, where he alone paid the last farthing of the dreadful debt of all the world. I beheld him on the Cross deface and destroy the obligation that was against me, and then enter once for all into the holy place by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for me. Approach, then, O my soul! to the throne of grace, and adore this unspeakable love which hath loved thee from the first. Love him eternally, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might, who hath made thee to know by experience the great mysteries of his holy love for all his creatures. Hallelujah! Amen.

Oh, what an alteration, from being a child of darkness to a child of light! Now I know in whom I have believed, and desire to consecrate myself to my Lord, my Sovereign Good, the remainder of my days.

My conversion made a great stir among the people, for they saw me adoring my divine Saviour on all occasions, and before all company without exception; calling upon and exhorting each one to submit to the love of God, just as they found themselves, and although their sins were many and great, his grace was greater to receive and pardon, but that we must come as we are, for he is the beginning and the end of the conversion of all the human species, and whosoever is not converted by him and to him is not converted at all.

The French ministers were very uneasy at what they heard concerning me, doubting that I was a true Protestant, and therefore demanded a written confession of my faith; I told them paper would suffer anything to be written upon it, truth or falsehood, but that I was not ashamed to confess with my mouth what I believed in my heart, and if they would let me know when they would meet together,

I would be ready to appear before them, and give an account of my faith, and the wonders which the most Holy Trinity had wrought within me.

The time was fixed, and I appeared before them. They asked me many questions, but we could not agree, for they held predestination, and I held the restoration of all souls; because having myself been the chief of sinners, and God through Jesus Christ, by the efficacy of his Holy Spirit, had granted me mercy and the pardon of all my sins, and plucked me as a brand out of Hell, I could not have a doubt but the whole world would be saved by the same power. They answered me that I must not take it ill that they could not own me as a member of their church. I replied, that I was very well satisfied to be cast out, and my consolation was, they were unable to blot my name out of the Book of Life.

Soon after, I became acquainted with some persons who led a very retired life, having received a deep knowledge of themselves through grace; we sometimes met together, but we were soon persecuted with reproach.

After that, I received a voice of grace inwardly to

go and preach the Gospel in France; I resisted it more than once or twice, fearing persecution, but I was struck with a sickness and had pain like the agony of death, was ready to die, and, believing it was because I had not obeyed the voice that called me to bear witness to the truth in France, I humbled myself before my God through Jesus Christ, my Lord, asking pardon for my offences, and promising to submit myself and follow his divine command; upon which I was immediately healed, and grew more robust than I had ever been before. Then I heard his voice once more, calling me to preach the Gospel in France, and I was obliged in my soul to obey the voice, though with fear and trembling.

I therefore took passage at Dover for Calais, and immediately upon my arrival I began to preach and proclaim the good news in the market-place, even the eternal salvation by Jesus Christ within us, that we all might be saved by pure grace, for whosoever knowing himself, feeling the burthen of his iniquities, having recourse to Jesus Christ, and resigning himself without reserve, with all his sins, even had he found himself in his damnable estate, should be delivered and receive full pardon for all his sins.

As soon as I had finished, I was taken before a magistrate, and made to understand that my conduct was contrary to the statute of the King. I was then conducted to prison, where I was no sooner arrived than all fear of persecution vanished; my soul was strengthened in the Lord Jesus; I felt the love of my divine Saviour very near, accompanied with his divine light. After some days had passed, I was brought before the justice, and examined as to who I was, and by what authority I preached; I told him who I was, and that I was drawn by the special grace of God in Jesus Christ, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to teach the different nations, and that for refusing to follow the voice of my God I was taken very sick. While they were examining me there came in an old man with a white beard; I noticed that all the justices saluted him; he said to them, "Have nothing to do with this person, for I have suffered much the past night on his account," and immediately withdrew.

I was then sentenced to eight days' imprisonment,—as it was the first offence,—and to be conducted by the servant of the magistrate beyond the bounds of the city, letting me know that if I was found em-

ployed in the same manner a second time, my life would be in peril.

I was seventeen years of age when I began to preach in France, and was thus employed in that kingdom for two years, preaching the Gospel in high and low Normandy, the country of my father, for he was born in the city of Rouen.*

There were many ministers of us together; M. Durant, de la Chevrette, Dumoulin, L'Achar, etc. We met together in mountains and woods, to the number of four hundred, where God very often wrought great wonders by the power of the Gospel, among men and women, and even boys and girls of the age of twelve or fifteen years, unable to read or write. They were convinced by the power of grace, and began to proclaim the Gospel with a most marvellous strength of spirit, without fear, being embraced by divine love.

We were many times taken prisoners, and sometimes betrayed by our own brothers, who would inform the soldiers in the marshalsey where we were met together.

* The family still retains its prominence in France.

Many were hanged, others whipped by the hands of the hangman and branded with a hot iron, all of their property confiscated, and they sent on board of the galleys ; yet this did not terrify or weaken us, but, on the contrary, the grace of our Divine Love strengthened us to a marvellous degree.

We were finally surrounded by a party of soldiers one day when we were assembled by the side of Dieppe, and many were taken prisoners, among whom was myself and M. Durant, a young man about twenty-four years of age, from Genoa.

After a month of imprisonment we were condemned to die, M. Durant to be hanged, and I to be beheaded. We were conducted together to the place of execution ; M. Durant sung the 116th Psalm when on the ladder, and died joyfully.

I was then conducted to the scaffold, my eyes were ordered to be bound, but at my earnest request that was omitted ; I then fell upon my knees, and, praying the Lord that he would not require my blood at their hands, as they knew not what they did, my soul was filled with exceeding joy. The executioner bound my hands, and while he was employed in so doing, a courier arrived from Louis

XV., the King, with a reprieve for me. Immediately the joy of my heart was gone and darkness entered into my soul. I was then reconducted to prison at Paris, where I was confined some time, and finally liberated through the intercession of the Queen.

Many things happened to me during my exile in France, and the term of my confinement. One may easily discover here that the grace of God never leaves those who put their trust in him and are faithful until death.

After my release I retired into Germany, where I began to learn the language with great difficulty. I discovered many souls who were convinced by grace, and who led a very retired life among the French refugees at Berlin, Magdeburg, Brandenburg, Brunswick in the Palatinate, Hamburg, Altona, Stade, Gluckstadt, Bremen, the country of Hanover in Flanders, Brabant, the low-land of Holland, the country of the Waldenses, and many other places.

I found work all around, souls who desired salvation. I had also a large acquaintance among the nobility in Germany and Holland, and we had a large communion of brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ our Lord.

I was actively employed in travelling from place to place, in visiting the brethren, and preaching in the German, French, and Dutch languages. There were many different assemblies of the brethren; in some places we had liberty, and where that could not be had publicly, we met secretly in particular families; nevertheless grace wrought wonders in convincing souls and leading them to a real deep knowledge of themselves, and of the damnable estate into which all men are plunged by nature, for none can obtain salvation without first being condemned in themselves.

I was much concerned about the salvation of souls, and their estate deeply affected me. I also had an acquaintance with a company of gentry, who dwelt together near Siegen: some of them were married, but only lived with each other as brethren and sisters: the Baron of Peuchink, the Lords of Fleishbein, and the Count of Marsey—who was employed in writing books which were printed in both French and German.

They led very retired lives, filled with friendship and love for all the world, and were very charitable alike to all. Our acquaintance with each other was

brought about in a wonderful manner. One day brother Marsey had a vision concerning me. I had arrived in the Palatinate, about twenty leagues distant from him, and was drawn by grace to prostrate myself in spirit before the presence of the most Holy Trinity, when in a vision I beheld a marvellous throne with seven foot-stools; upon each foot-stool were two candlesticks of gold, and upon the throne I saw a great table with seven other candlesticks, also of gold, placed in a circle upon it; then I saw many angelic beings, with robes whiter than snow, who stood near the candlesticks of gold, on either side of the foot-stools and around the table. Immediately the candles were lighted, and they began to sing praise, honor, and glory to the Most High, so that my soul was lost in admiration; then the entire company on bended knees adored the Holy Trinity. The vision vanished in an instant and I came to myself.

A short time after this I received a letter from brother Marsey written after the following manner :

“My well-beloved and dear brother in Jesus Christ our Lord :

“The most Holy Trinity discovers many wonders to his children, who are rooted upon the rock of deliverance, and

have their eyes of faith fixed upon their Sovereign Good, who honors them with his universal presence, and embraces them with the fire of heavenly love; as I have been favored with the consolation of seeing you in his holy presence, I hope you will not deny that communion in the body which we have had together in spirit, to the praise and glory of our God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, by the efficacy of his Holy Spirit.

“Thus wishes and dwells forever

“Marsey, Your Brother.

“United by the grace of God, Amen.”

After I had passed about eighteen years in Germany and Holland, I became sickly, and had a consumptive disorder, occasioned by my deep concern for the salvation of souls. I was much disquieted, because the greater portion of them walked in the ways of perverseness and neglected their conversion. This caused me great trouble, and I took it so to heart that I believed my happiness would be incomplete while one creature remained miserable. At times, by grace within me, I felt a little comforted, but that state of mind did not endure long.

At that time I dwelt with the brethren in the country, near the city of Mons and Haguenau, near the borders of France, in the Emperor's dominions.

My fever increased, and reduced me almost to a

skeleton, so that they were obliged to feed me as an infant. While I lay in this weak state, I was favored through grace with many visions. In one of them it appeared to me that I was conducted into a fine plain, filled with all kinds of trees, agreeable both to the sight and smell, and loaded with the most delicious fruits, which came to my mouth and satisfied me as with a river of pleasure; at the same time I beheld the inhabitants, who were beautiful beyond expression, clothed in garments white as snow. They were filled with humility and divine love; they saluted me with profound reverence, saying, with a voice of love which penetrated me, "Dear soul, take courage, be comforted, and in a little time you shall behold the wonders of God, in the restoration, without exception, of all the human species."

The weakness of my body so increased that I believed I was dying. I exhorted my dear brethren to be steadfast, immovable, turning inward with a lively faith, to behold the Lamb of God with believing eyes, and to listen to his eternal word within them, and then they should receive the fulness of Christ, grace upon grace, by which they would be

strengthened to abide steadfast unto the end ; faithful unto death.

As I had communion with many assemblies of the brethren, but particularly that with which my dear brother Marsey was connected ; they had a vision of my death, and sent brother Marsey to visit me. When he arrived he found me in the agonies of death. He embraced me with a kiss of love and peace, saluting me in the name of the brethren, who commended themselves to me, and desired to be remembered before the throne of God and the Lamb.

He then took leave of me, and I felt myself die by degrees. Exactly at midnight my soul was separated from my body, and I saw the people occupied in washing it, according to the custom of the country. I had a strong desire to be freed from the sight of my body, and immediately I was drawn upward as in a cloud, and beheld great wonders beyond my power to describe.

I quickly arrived at a place which to my eyes appeared like a level plain, so extensive that my sight was unable to reach its limits, filled with many kinds of delightful fruit-trees, agreeable to behold, sending forth such fragrant odors that the air was

filled with incense. In this place I found that I had two guardians, one at my right hand, and the other at my left, beautiful beyond expression, whose boundless love and tenderness profoundly affected me. . . . They had wings, and resembled angels, having shining bodies and white garments. He at my right hand came before me and said, "My dear soul and my dear brother, take courage: the most Holy Trinity hath favored you to be comforted with an everlasting and universal consolation, by discovering to you in what manner he will restore all his creatures, without exception, to the praise of his glory and their eternal salvation; and you shall be witness of this, and shall rejoice in singing triumphantly with all the children of God. Therefore, as a reward for the love you have borne for your neighbors, on whose account you have been deeply grieved, and shed many tears, which shall now be wiped away from your eyes, God himself will change your sorrows into great joy and gladness." Then he returned to his place at my right hand. After that, the second guardian, who was at my left hand, appeared before me and spoke thus: "My dear soul, my dear brother, be of good cheer,

for after all your sorrow thou shalt be strengthened and comforted with an universal and eternal consolation. . . . You must be prepared to pass through the seven habitations of the damned; be of good courage, for you will feel something of their sufferings; let your mind be turned inward deeply during the time, and you shall thereby be preserved." He then took his place at my left hand. Immediately we were lifted up in the air, and after a time arrived in a dark, obscure place, where nothing but weeping, lamentation, and gnashing of teeth could be heard,—a dreadful place, being a repository of all souls under condemnation with the torments, griefs, pains, and sufferings which their sins had merited, for the works of each followed him in death.

All iniquities and sins were reduced to seven classes or habitations, in which great confusion reigned; that which one created another destroyed. The duellist, in the fire of his anger, burns against his enemy, and they pass as a flame and firebrand of Hell, one through the other.

There were fornicators, adulterers, ravishers, the covetous, thieves, drunkards, and slanderers, each laboring and employed with his own sins and ini-

quities. There were also all kinds and conditions of men there,—divines, deputies, controverters, advocates, judges, and lawyers. In a word, one might quickly discover what each of them had done upon earth.

In each habitation, I observed that those who were abased, and appeared sorrowful for their sins, were separated from the others who were not so.

I was then conducted into each of the seven habitations of the damned, where I saw one whom I had known upon earth. They were able to see the elect from this habitation, but were unable to pass over to them, because there was a great gulf between them, so that all were obliged to dwell in their own habitations. It is impossible to describe my own condition, as I had great compassion towards these sufferers, inasmuch as I suffered with them.

We were then lifted up some distance above and out of this place, and were in repose, when a messenger came who gave us water, and refreshed us as with a river of pleasure, saying, "Eat, my beloved, and drink, my friends, to refresh yourselves after all your toils and pains. My dear soul, and my dear

brother (addressing himself to me), the most Holy Trinity always works wonders in all times within his poor creatures, and he will order, for a time and a half time, that you shall return to your earthly tabernacle, to proclaim and publish to the people of the world an universal Gospel, that shall restore, in time, all the human species, without exception, to the honor and glory of the most Holy Trinity. Hallelujah!" Beholding the messenger attentively, I discovered that he had a most glorious body, clad in robes whiter than snow; he was filled with the most exalted love and friendship, united with the deepest humility, which again penetrated my whole being. Suddenly I heard a great multitude of the heavenly host, and the messenger said, with a sweet voice,—as he flew away to join them,—“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty! who was, and is, and who is to come.”

The multitude was innumerable; One there was who surpassed in beauty, grandeur, magnificence, majesty, and excellence all others; he was the Son of the living God, having the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power, who, having

by himself purged our sins, sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

As the multitude approached, the glory caused us to fall down and adore in spirit and in truth the Son of the living God, who walked in their midst.

After they had passed us we were lifted up and made to follow them, for the air, in a different manner than before, carried us the way they went. Oh, the wonders of our God! Arrived at the place of the seven habitations of the damned, we could perceive no more darkness, obscurity, pains, torments, afflictions, lamentations, or gnashing of teeth; all were quiet, and an agreeable serenity pervaded the whole. Then all the heavenly host shouted as with one voice and said, "An eternal and everlasting deliverance, an eternal and everlasting restoration, universal and everlasting restitution of all things!" Then all the multitude adored the most Holy Trinity, and sang, in the most harmonious manner, the song of the Lamb, even the song of triumph for the victory gained by him, and at the end all the multitude, being upon their knees, cried with a loud voice, "Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord, God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, O King of

Saints!" Then they passed through the seven habitations of the damned, and numbers were delivered from each, and being clothed in white robes, they followed the heavenly host, praising and gloryifying the Most High for their deliverance; one might distinguish them from among the others; they all retired by a different way from that in which they came.

The messenger then appeared and led us into a most wonderful place, and commanded my two guardians to conduct me into five celestial mansions, where the Lord's elect abide; then reconduct me to dwell yet a time and a half time in my earthly habitation, and to preach to the lower world the universal and everlasting Gospel,—that the most Holy Trinity hath a boundless, universal love towards all the human race, without exception, and for each one in particular; then turning towards me, he said, "My dear soul, my dear brother, thou shalt be favored of the most Holy Trinity to be conducted by thy guardians, who shall never leave thee; when thou shalt need their counsel, thou hast only to call them, and they shall be present, day and night, at thy service. They shall now conduct thee into five of the

heavenly mansions, where thou shalt partake in a certain degree of the celestial glory as much as thy spirit shall be able to receive, not being yet sufficiently purified and sanctified; then thou shalt be reconducted into thine earthly tabernacle for a time and a half time, and shall preach to the lower world the universal Gospel,—that the most Holy Trinity hath a boundless, universal love towards all the human race, and for each one in particular. The Fountain of Grace bless and preserve thee, and cause his face to shine upon thee and enlighten thine understanding, both in time and eternity. Amen.” Our knees bending of their own accord, he laid his hand upon my head and blessed me, and immediately and swiftly fled away.

After that, my guardians conducted me into five celestial habitations, where I discovered many wonders. Some had greater brightness, glory, and majesty than others, and as the places were, so were the inhabitants; some were clothed in garments whiter than snow; others had transparent bodies, and others again had white bodies resembling crystal. It is impossible to describe these things. They were moved by boundless, burning love, rising, and

then plunging themselves into the deepest humility ; all their motions were filled with love and friendship. . . . Their actions and manners were animated with brightness, being filled with light as with the sun's rays ; it was the fire of divine love, which by inflaming their hearts animated them with the same spirit.

They have no need of any speech there. The language of eternal and universal love is expressed in all their actions ; their motions speak more than all words.

I was then conducted into five habitations of the elect. At the first, a great multitude came before us, with songs to the honor and glory of the Most High, and of victory gained over the damned. They received us with triumph, friendship, and love, saluting us with profound humility, conducting us into a large room, in which there was a great table covered with all kinds of fruit, not only pleasant to behold, but exceedingly delicious to the taste.

In the mean time, while we were taking our repast, the celestial multitude sang psalms of praise and thanksgiving to the most Holy Trinity. After that,

we were conducted into all the five celestial habitations (that I was to see), where I beheld many other wonders, impossible to describe. First, many elevated thrones of surpassing beauty and magnificence; upon one of the thrones I saw the Royal High Priest, surrounded with exceeding great brightness, and clothed with most excellent majesty, who was employed in kind intercession before his Father, for all the human race, pleading that his bloodshedding was sufficient to sanctify and deliver a thousand such worlds as ours. All the elect, with the heavenly spirits, united their intercession with that of their Royal High Priest, the only Chief King, and were reconcilers, saviours, and restorers in the same spirit.

This mutual intercession appeared like incense ascending on high into the sanctuary of the Lord. Over against the throne I saw Adam, with Eve, rejoicing in the only Mediator between God and man, and adoring the most Holy Trinity for the deliverance of their children out of the great miseries and eternal condemnation into which their sin and fall had cast them, adoring him upon their bended knees for his intercessions in behalf of man-

kind. I also beheld a multitude of spirits all aglow with the fire of divine love, while we adored, humbled in nothingness, the Most High, for his intercession and deliverance of all mankind. Then my guardian who was at my right hand, coming before me, addressed me after this manner: "Dear soul, my dear brother, do you see this multitude of spirits, who are ravished in the spirit of love and gratitude, humbled and self-annihilated, as it were, in their adoration of the Saviour before the throne of grace for the intercessions he hath made for them? These were lately released from the infernal prisons; they had dwelt a long time in the place of the damned, under the power of the second death, and passed through many agonies, pains, and tribulations; for them the tincture of the blood of Jesus Christ was shed even to the last drop." . . . Then Adam and Eve approached, and Adam spoke to me after this manner: "My dear brother, rejoice with universal and eternal joy, since you are favored with the heavenly visions; in this manner our adorable Royal High Priest, Mediator, and Intercessor, shall restore all my descendants to the glory of our God, and their eternal and universal salvation, for the kingdom

of eternal love hath sufficient power to deliver all mankind from their bondage, and they shall say, O death, where is thy sting? But, my dear brother, this love of our God in Jesus Christ, by the power of his Holy Spirit, shall not only gain the victory over all the human race, but also surmount and overthrow the kingdom of Satan entirely, with all the principalities of the fallen angels, and restore them to their first glory, which they had in the beginning. I will make all things new, saith the Lord of Hosts, and the end shall return unto its beginning." O my Lord, and my God, what great wonders hast thou caused to pass before mine eyes! Who am I, O my God? dust and ashes; an ungrateful and rebellious creature. I would not dare to lift mine eyes towards the heavens if the blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, did not plead for me. My soul rejoices and is glad, and shouts with joy: O my God, whom I reverence, love, and adore; before whom I desire to be always, and at thy feet, self-annihilated! O my Lord, and my God, the seraphim and cherubim, burning with the fire of thy heavenly love, adore and honor thee! Give me thy grace also, O my God, that I may be consumed before thee, while I sing praises

to thy majesty and glory for my creation and redemption. I would praise him incessantly, not in shadow or figure, but in reality and truth. I would continue faithful to thee, and be swallowed up in the ocean of thy love, without a desire to leave it.

Being in this manner conducted through five celestial habitations, I discovered many mysteries, saw many miracles, and beheld the wonders of the most Holy Trinity among the children, the elect, and the heavenly inhabitants, and perceived how some surpassed others in brightness, light, splendor, and majesty; in friendship, love, humiliation, and self-abasement, concerning which things my tongue is too feeble to speak, and my pen to write. I adore the marvellous ways of my God, with all the happy spirits.

I saw many thrones, palaces, temples, edifices, and buildings, and fruit-trees, with rivers of pleasure flowing along through the celestial land, which appeared like a garden of Heaven, even the Paradise of God. It is the Court of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. . . . It is the Celestial World, where the New Jerusalem, or Mount Zion, is placed, where

the bosom of Abraham is ; where the sufferers who came out of their tribulations are refreshed and, forgetting all their past miseries, made to rejoice in Zion ; O magnificent city ! O thou city of the Great God ! . . . Where shall a mortal find suitable phrases to lisp out a little of thy glory and splendor, the glory and magnificence of the most Holy Trinity, where thou art pleased to manifest thyself in thy pomp and beauty ? There the blessed angels find their employment in serving God ; they compose the Court of the Great King ; O my God, I am not able to express that which penetrates me ; my tongue is too feeble to describe the grandeur, magnificence, splendor, and pomp of thy dwellings, or the majesty of their inhabitants. Hallelujah and victory forever. *Amen.*

Then my guardians took me up, and reconducted me to the house from whence I came, where I beheld the people assembled, and saw my body in the coffin, with which I was reunited, and lodged within my earthly tabernacle. Upon gaining consciousness I recognized my dear brother Marsey, and many others, who told me that I was twenty-five hours in the coffin, and seventeen hours out of it, which

altogether made forty-two hours; but to me they seemed as many years.*

Then I began to preach the universal Gospel, and was again put in prison, but soon set at liberty. My Lord and my God having called me to preach the Gospel in America,† I visited and took leave of all

* Extraordinary as was this event in Dr. de Benneville's life, some parallel experiences, particularly in the lives of pious and devout persons, can be found in biographical history. Those who care to pursue the subject further are referred to the case of Rev. William Tennent [1705-1777], a Presbyterian clergyman of Freehold, New Jersey, who was three days in a trance. His narrative of what he saw in the celestial world was published by Elias Boudinot, a Philadelphia philanthropist and author.

† Who was the founder of Universalism in America? is a question upon which some diversity of opinion still prevails. As far as our research extends, we find the popular belief, that John Murray [1741-1815] was the *first* preacher and defender of "Restorationism," to be erroneous. There is incontrovertible evidence that Dr. de Benneville antedated Murray as a preacher of Universal Restoration many years, both in Europe and America. As early as 1745, while a practicing physician in Oley, near Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania, he was a zealous and fearless advocate of its tenets, and preached in his own house,—in a room devoutly set apart for the purpose,—“without money and without price,” *twenty-five years prior to John Murray's emigration to America and when that celebrated expounder of Universalism was but four years of age.*

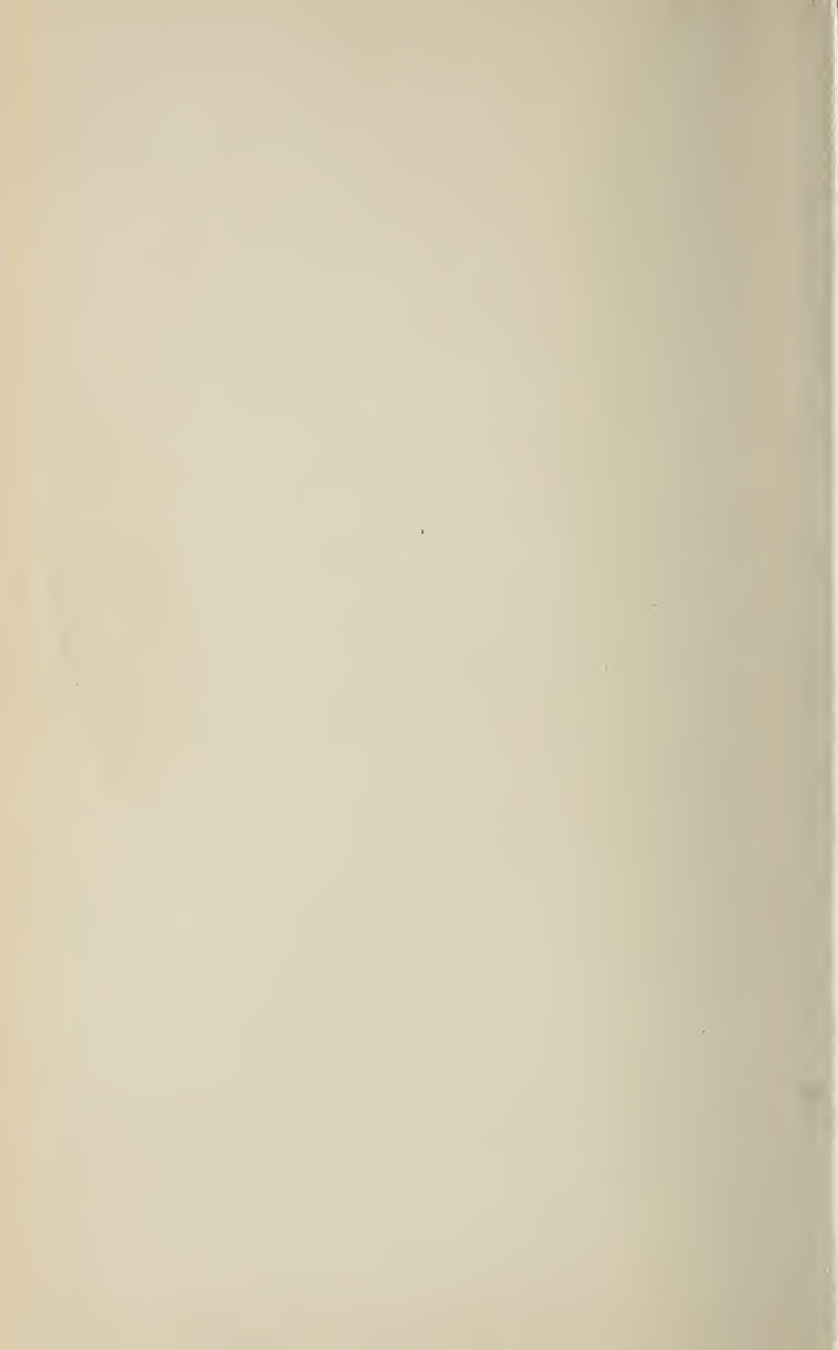
my brethren, and took my departure for America in the thirty-eighth year of my age, and it is forty-one years since my arrival here. The twenty-sixth of July next, 1782, I shall be seventy-nine years of age. Blessed be the name of the Lord forever!

It should be understood by the non-Universalist reader, that the modern definition and acceptance of Universalism differs materially from the earlier doctrines of that denomination of Christians, as promulgated by de Benneville, Murray, and others, they, the Eighteenth Century Fathers, teaching the ultimate salvation of all souls,—*i.e.*, after passing through a temporary form of punishment, designed to purify and prepare them for a state of happiness,—while the Moderns preach Universal Salvation, and no retributive punishment whatever in the future life, believing that the wicked receive their full measure of retribution on earth.

THE END.

EXPLANATION.

The last clause in the note on page 42 refers more particularly to the followers of Hosea Ballou.



APPENDIX.

DR. DE BENNEVILLE, as his narrative states, was born in London, England, early in the last century. He came of French Huguenot stock, and was the son of George de Benneville and Marie Granville, of Rouen, in Normandy, France. His father was a French nobleman and Protestant refugee; some mention of his paternal grandfather, François de Benneville, may be found in M. Charles Weiss's "History of the Protestant Refugees," Vol. I., Book II. His parents, to escape religious persecution, fled to England in 1697, and were attached to the Court of King William III. His only sister, Marie de Benneville, became the wife of the Earl of Limerick.

In Dr. de Benneville's story of his life no reference is made to his scientific studies in Germany. It was during his eighteen years of residence there that the religious part of his character received, apparently, its greatest development, culminating in the most extraordinary experience of his life. Yet

apart from his religious activities, he was zealously devoted to scientific study, including the branch of medicine.

Following divine direction, he emigrated to America in 1741. The first person to greet him upon his arrival in the country of his adoption was Christopher Sauer, known in Germantown annals as a printer and publisher, contemporaneously with Benjamin Franklin, and credited with having *first* published in America a quarto Bible in German. The marvellous manner in which their meeting was brought about is thus referred to by Rev. Abel C. Thomas, in his "Autobiography," p. 89:

"Christopher Sauer was a well-known printer in Germantown as far back as the early part of the eighteenth century. In the year 1741 he informed his wife one morning that he had received commandment in a dream to hitch his horses to his carriage, proceed to a certain wharf in Philadelphia, distant seven miles, inquire on board a ship, just arrived, for a man who was ill, convey him to Germantown, and take a special care of him.

"Pursuing his instructions, Mr. Sauer found

everything as described, and brought the sick man to his own house. That man was DR. GEORGE DE BENNEVILLE."

Not long after his convalescence, Dr. de Benneville settled in Oley, Berks County, Pennsylvania, established himself as a physician, and began to preach the doctrines of Universal Restoration. Here he intermarried with the Bertollette family* (also French Huguenots and Protestant refugees), on the twenty-fourth of February, 1745. About this time he built a large and substantial dwelling, in which a room was set apart for Christian worship; here, until his removal to Germantown, Pennsylvania, he lived and preached, with unabated fervor, the hopeful tenets of Universalism. The house is still standing, in a fair state of preservation, and, being regarded by many as the cradle of Universalism in America, it should

* He married Esther Bertollette, daughter to Jean and Susanna Bertollette, who was born in Germany (where her parents had fled from religious persecution), the twelfth of August, 1720. Her mother was grand-daughter of the noble family of de Harcourt in France. The Bertollette family were originally from La Rochelle, France. They came to America in 1724, and settled at New Rochelle, New York, and subsequently moved to Oley, Pennsylvania, in 1726.

have an historical and sacred interest for all devout Universalists.

Dr. de Benneville preached the Gospel and practiced medicine, not only in Pennsylvania, in which he travelled extensively among the Indian tribes, but his active ministrations extended into Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. About 1757 he removed to Germantown, and subsequently to Milestown,* Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.

That Dr. de Benneville was pre-eminently a pious man, all who knew him intimately in life, and his writings in English, French, and German, abundantly attest. The following letter, translated from the German by E. A. Atlee, is taken from his correspondence; it is addressed to one of the Christian brethren in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, and written in the devoutly religious vein characteristic of the writer:

“To the Beloved Brother, Ezekiel Sangsmeister, in Ephrata.
Immanuel.

“In the Grace of the Lord Jesus. Beloved Brother Ezekiel, —I cannot forbear saluting thee with a few lines, in and from true, impartial love; well knowing that our acquaintance and

* Or Milestone.

fellowship have not their origin in perishable things, such as are of no account, even though in outward appearance most specious, and apparently spiritual. These, at best, endure no longer than to the close of this miserable life. If it is to continue beyond this, and reach into eternity, its foundation in us must be from an eternal origin, either blessed or miserable. For every tree is known by its fruits, whether it be corporeal, natural, hypocritical, anti-Christian, or godly, spiritual, true, and substantial. Thus is the source manifest even in this life. Oh, that this last may, in us and in all mankind, bear rule and have dominion! Then shall Heaven again exist on earth: then shall there be, between Time and Eternity, no difference. This is my inmost desire. So that, not of myself, but through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, was our fellowship commenced. Where this is there is true communion, blessed acquaintance, spiritual remembrance, prayer in spirit and in truth, without image or form. There the everlasting, unlimited love of God in Christ Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, is manifested in our midst, unto fellowship in him and us. There do we reciprocally offer up, inwardly to the Lord our God, what flows into us from him, or what the spirit of his grace operates in our inward man. This is spiritual and divine life; for nothing can ascend unto him but what descends from him. In this ground do I embrace thee, do I kiss thee in spirit, and write unto thee and all thy household, who submit unto the inward operation of this unmerited grace. May it continue in time and in eternity. Amen.

“For this cause am I, now in my seventy-sixth year, con-

trary to my own expectation and that of my friends, encompassed with many bodily infirmities, prepared and strengthened once more to move my stammering tongue and utter my unworthy voice; if happily there may yet be found any that have the true wisdom from above, who are no longer turning outward, but inward; no more to their own likeness as creatures, but unto the living God, in the ground of their own hearts, waiting in quiet introversion until God in Christ through the Holy Spirit shall come, and work that which is well pleasing to himself, unto his own glory, and our true salvation.

“This was the attraction, the power, which inwardly affected me, to desire reward for my preaching, in these last days of great tribulation. And my reward is this: that each father and mother of a family, with all the children and domestics, may devote an hour of every day to the Lord our God, in assembling in stillness, side by side, as in the presence of God, and in humility waiting on the inward illumination of the spirit of grace in their hearts.

“The Lord will grant this in the quiet gathering of your hearts, and cause instruction to flow from one to another; only let his divine aid be sought in prayer, or the reading of a chapter, or singing of a psalm or hymn; so co-operating with him as that the tongue may be a member of righteousness, and out of the fulness of the heart, by the Holy Spirit, attune itself to the love and praise of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And also that every house may be a meeting-house, and every father and mother, by a godly life and conversation, may be

an example to the children and domestics. This is the reward to which I aspire. Yea. Amen. Hallelujah!

"It would be very satisfactory to me could I, after some time in stillness, be favored with a glimpse of the countenance of my God, in order to the bringing all into unity. I must, however, submit in patience to his divine will, and only send up continued aspirations, that the Lord may bring me, worn out as I am, into my allotted place. Amen.

"Present our united salutation of friendship to all your brethren and kindred without exception.

"G. DE B.

"Think of me, as I do of thee, before the Lord.

Vale, mi Frater.

"BRISTOL, PENNSYLVANIA, November 1, 1779."

Few men possessed a livelier faith in the efficacy of prayer, or offered up their supplications to the Mercy Seat with a more profound sense of their own unworthiness and absolute dependence on Almighty God, than the subject of these comments, so that Dr. de Benneville was in the fullest sense a prayerful man.

Saint Augustine says, "Should any ask me, What is the first thing in religion? I would reply, The first, second, and third thing therein, nay, all, is humility." If there was one Christian attribute that

transcended all others in Dr. de Benneville's character, it was humility. One of his first acts after his settlement in America was the voluntary destruction of all insignia of rank. During his long and useful career in this country he was often honored with visits from men of rank and distinction from abroad, and such was his aversion to all forms of ostentation and display, his titled visitors were received apart from his children, knowing that their conversation and manner would betray his own rank and station, and thereby foster vanity and pride in them. When in the eighty-first year of his age, his services and influence were solicited by Louis XVI., through a royal commission, who visited and requested him to return to France and assist the government in quieting the dissensions which at that time menaced the kingdom, but his advanced years and physical infirmities precluded such a possibility.

The following extract from his own MS. dated Bristol Township, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, the fifth of March, 1773, is interesting as a preface to some of his last wishes:

“In the name of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who prepared man to be his outward court,

our soul to be his holy place, and our ghost to be the holy of holies, of him let us lay hold in faith, and take out of the overflowing plenitude of his God-head the daily blessing we want, in order to pass with faith, earnestness, and love, through this dangerous wilderness, until, through the vale of humility and annihilation, we arrive with peace and blessing at the Sabbath Rest, which is reserved for the children of God. Amen. Hallelujah."

In this characteristic paper he admonishes his children, in a profoundly reverential and solemn manner, on the subject of their spiritual and temporal welfare, and, referring to his dissolution as likely to occur suddenly, gives most explicit directions as to the disposition of his body after that event; desiring that all preliminary preparations for the grave be of the severest simplicity, and that the interment take place at sunset, "in the dusk of the evening, in quietness and simplicity," without pomp, noise, or parade.

He commends his immortal soul, in the name of Jesus Christ, to his Heavenly Father, and, referring to his conversion, and the religious life that followed, says, "To him my Lord is due all glory, praise,

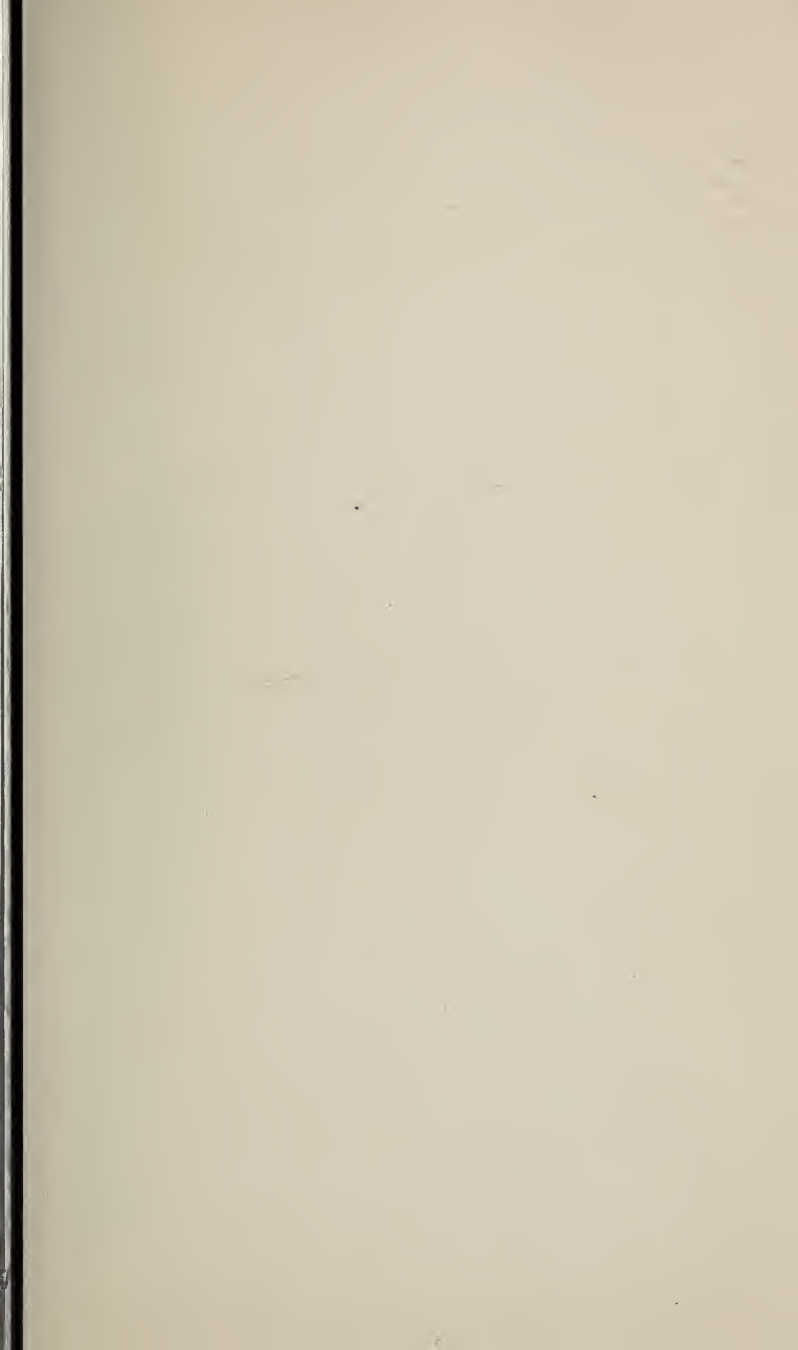
thanks, and adoration for it," and declares "that all discourses which I delivered from time to time, either abroad or in America, verbally or in writing, are conformable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and founded on the Holy Scriptures, nor do I feel any accusation or scruple about it," and ends his declaration with, "I remain fixed in the faith that he will make all new and good in time and in all eternity." In his own remarkable narrative, Dr. de Benneville has related how he came to preach the Gospel.

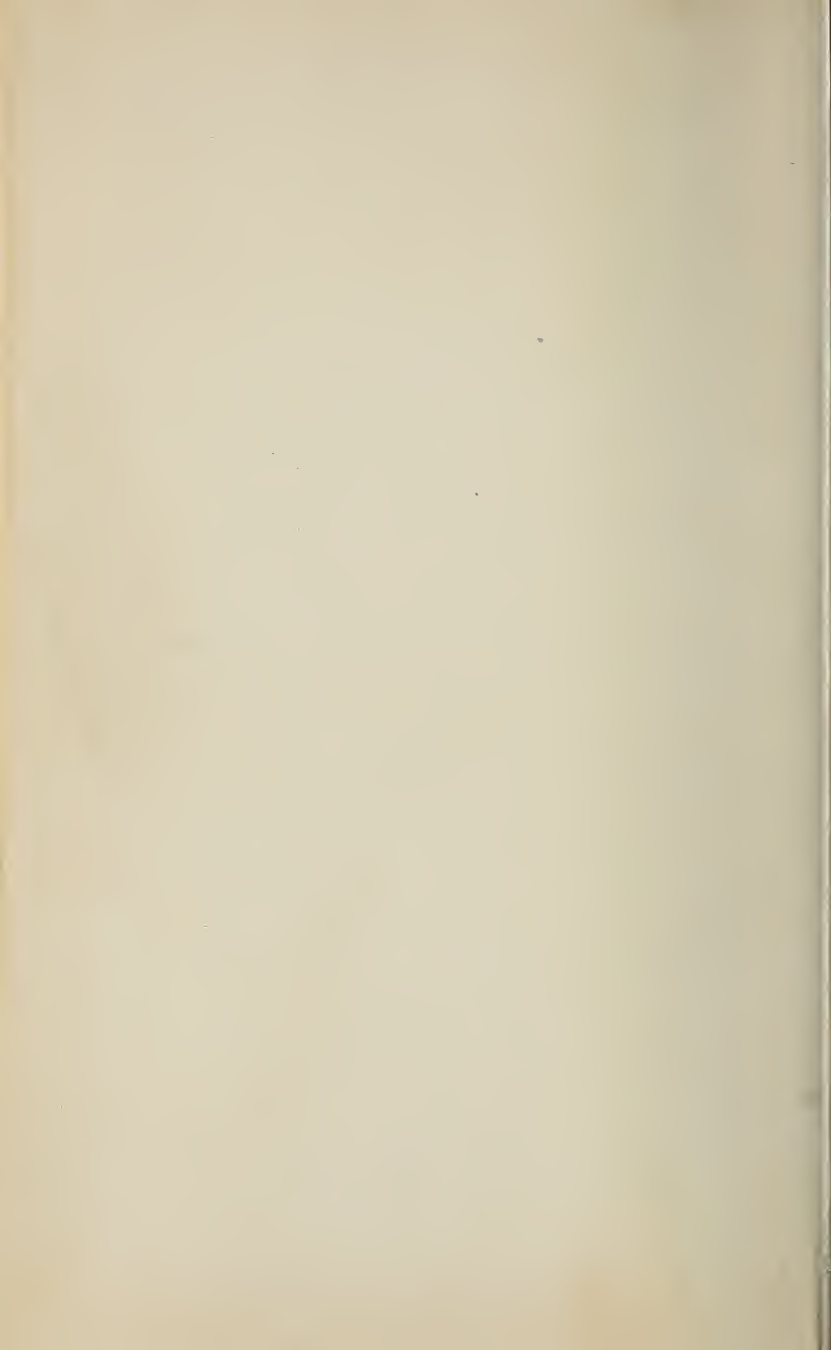
While he was noted both as preacher and physician, it is for the active and large part he had in propagating in Europe and America the hopeful doctrines of Universal Restoration—braving persecution and preaching a reformed religion in an era of superstition and bigotry—that his memory should be revered by all liberal Christians, but especially by that branch of the Christian Church that is the exponent of a Universalist faith.

Dr. de Benneville departed this life, after a few hours' illness, at Branchtown,—now Philadelphia,—Pennsylvania, on the nineteenth of March, 1793, in the ninetieth year of his age. From a conversation he had with his daughter, who visited him a few hours

previous to his last illness, he appears to have had a premonition of his death. The house in which he died is still standing, and is occupied by one of his descendants. He was buried in the de Benneville-Keim burial-ground, corner of Green Lane and Old York Road, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

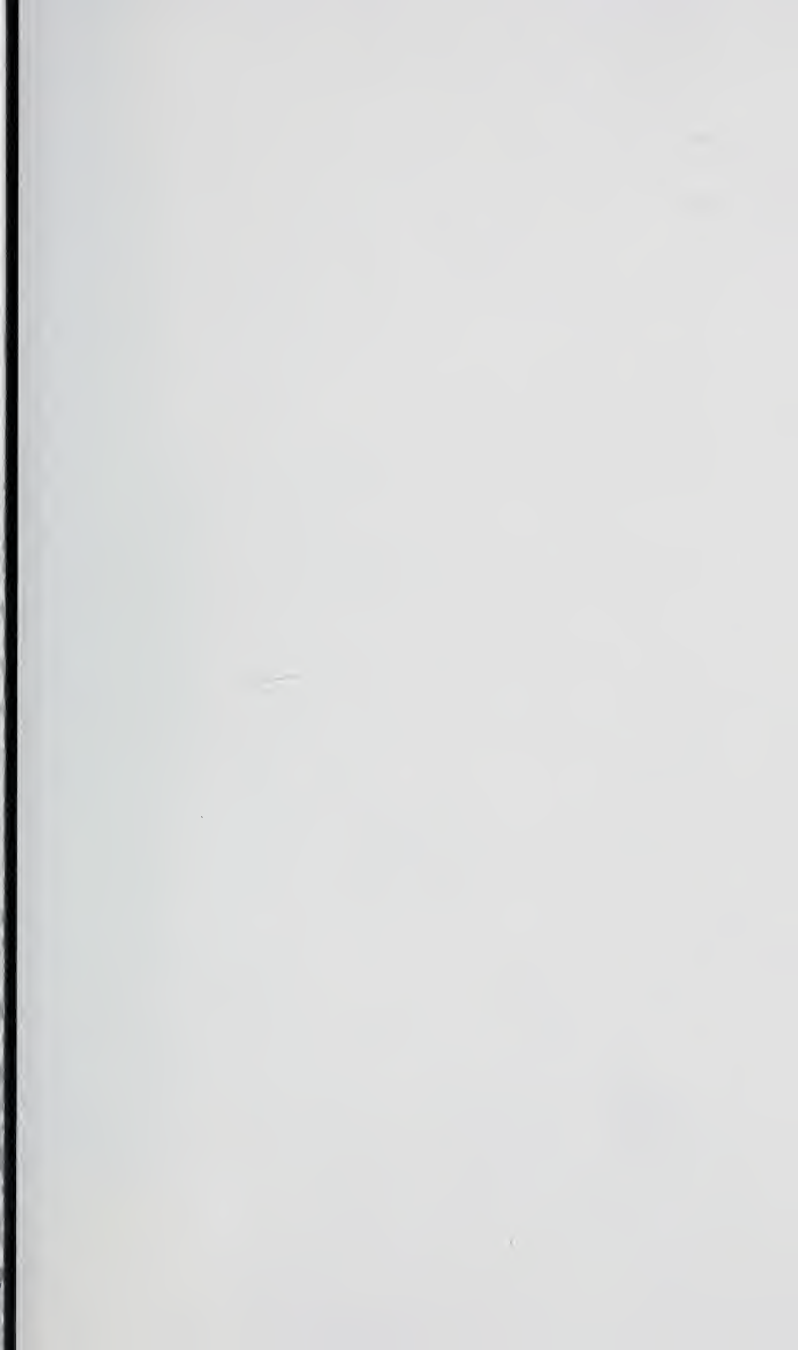
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